1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

LESU[1] is a village on the east coast of New Ireland about eighty miles from the northern end of the island. New Ireland is part of the Bismarck Archipelago and lies approximately between latitude 2° and 4° S. and longitude 150 and 153 E. It is in that part of the South Seas known ethnologically as Melanesia and is now under the political mandate of Australia. The island is long and narrow, about two hundred miles in length and an average width of twenty miles, except at its widest part in the extreme south, where it is approximately fifty miles across. It is divided into nine linguistic districts, in each one of which a different dialect is spoken. These dialects, while related, are not mutually intelligible. The linguistic unit in which I worked was comprised of five villages, Lesu, Ambwa, Langania, Libba, and Tandis, with a total population of about twelve hundred. It covered approximately twelve miles on the east coast north of the centre of New Ireland. I took up my residence in Lesu, which has a population of 232, and there did most of my work, although I visited other villages to attend various rites and secure ethnological information. Occasionally I went to a village in another linguistic district for some special ceremony, but such excursions were infrequent. I spent ten and a half months in Lesu, from March 1929 to February 1930.

When I first arrived, I found a partially completed and

[1] The spelling on Government maps and publications is Lossu. Lesu approximates more closely the phonetic pronunciation of the word by natives. New Ireland was formerly known as Neu Mecklenburg when it belonged to Germany.

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Lesu

LIFE IN LESU

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

THREE degrees south of the equator in the Western Pacific is the village of Lesu, on the east coast of New Ireland, part of the Bismarck Archipelago, a group of islands lying north-east of Australia. The New Irelanders are the tall, more or less well-built Melanesian type, with kinky black hair, brown skin, and somewhat negroid features, and are a hospitable, kindly, good-natured people. In the past the men wore no clothing at all and the women only a straw apron. To-day, however, because of white influence, every-one wears a loin-cloth, and the women sometimes wear blouses, but most of the time these are omitted.

In size, New Ireland is the second largest island of the Bismarck Archipelago, and is long and narrow in shape. Running through the centre is a low range of mountains, about 3,000 feet at their highest altitude. Along the coast, beginning at the northern end, runs a road for over a hundred miles, one of the few roads in the whole Territory of New Guinea. The road follows the coast in a winding fashion, uphill and downhill, and over it travel the natives, by foot, and occasionally by bicycle, from one village to another. Long stretches of road have on one side the dense bush with its thick undergrowth of tangled vines, its bright-coloured flowers, among them the familiar south-sea hibiscus, the tall coconut palms, the delicate bamboo trees, the nodding areca palms, and many other trees over which fly brightly plumed birds. On the other side lies a sea which is dazzlingly brilliant in the sunshine, its glare broken here